

**University of Toronto, Department of Public Health Sciences**  
**CHL 7001H Urban Epidemics: Past and Present**

Faculty: Anne-Emanuelle Birn  
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Time: Fridays 10 am - 12 pm Winter 2004  
Place: Haultain 409

Office Hours: Fridays 12:15-1:30pm. McMurrich Bldng, Room 109C

Class Size: Cap of 20 students

**Summary**

Polio. Plague. Pox. How and why have such epidemics emerged in urban settings and how has the city shaped these diseases? This graduate seminar will use historical, sociological, journalistic, epidemiological, documentary film, and literary sources to explore urban disease outbreaks and human responses from ancient to modern times, in cities throughout the world. By examining cases such as plague in Florence and Hong Kong, yellow fever in Charleston and Veracruz, smallpox in Rio de Janeiro and Bombay, AIDS in New York and Kampala, SARS in Toronto and Beijing, and air pollution in Barcelona and Mexico City, we will seek to understand the role of urban ecological factors in the emergence of disease, the cultural politics of blame and responsibility, and the nature of social, scientific, and civic authority responses to urban epidemics.

**Objectives**

1. To become familiar with a sample of recent and classic scholarship on epidemics in the urban context.
2. To increase the ability to think critically about disease outbreaks in urban settings through scientific, political, and cultural lenses.
3. To develop the ability to view contemporary epidemics in historical perspective.
4. To develop skills in oral discussion and debate and in research and writing skills.

## Assignments

- 1) Each week one or more students will be charged with commenting on the readings (up to 10 minutes), raising questions, and leading discussion. Please prepare a 1-page handout to accompany the discussion.
- 2) Write a 10-page (typed, double-spaced, standard margins) short story (science fiction or historical fantasy) in which you invent an imaginary urban epidemic and build a narrative that captures the human experience and public health challenges of the epidemic. Make sure that your story includes discussion of: a) the disease and its mode of transmission (however this is understood in your story's era); and b) the city as a key player. A more detailed description of the assignment will be distributed in class. **Due 13 February 2004.**
- 3) Pick an actual urban epidemic in any city of the world at any time in the present or past and prepare a 15-page (typed, double-spaced, standard margins) background paper for a documentary film you are proposing to the CBC. Use newspapers, medical journals, and other available sources to reconstruct "all sides" of the story. . A more detailed description of the assignment will be distributed in class. **Outline and Annotated Bibliography due 5 March 2004. Final Paper due last day of class.**

## Grading

Grades will be based upon the following elements:

Class participation	10%
Leading Class Discussion	10%
Short story	25%
Outline and Annotated Bibliography	15%
Paper presentation	5%
Final paper	35%

Assignments handed in after the due date will be penalized.

## Readings

All students are expected to do the required reading for each class session. Starting in January 2004, readings will be available to photocopy in the short-term loan section of Gerstein library. Many of the journal articles are also available through U of T Library e-journals (on-line access), as indicated on the syllabus by this symbol: ++.

## Class Sessions

**9 January 2004**

### **Introduction: Epidemics in the Urban Setting**

**\*\*Readings will be posted on my office door starting 8 December\*\***

Rosenberg, Charles E. Explaining Epidemics and other studies in the history of medicine. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Chapter 13. What is an epidemic? AIDS in historical perspective. pp.278-292

Chapter 14. Explaining epidemics. pp. 293-304.

Fitzpatrick, Kevin and Mark LaGory. Unhealthy Places. The ecology of risk in the urban landscape. Routledge, NY. 2000

Chapter 3. The ecology of everyday urban life. pp. 47-81

### **Recommended:**

++Hippocrates. On Airs, Waters and Places, (any edition) passim.

Birn, Anne-Emanuelle "Six Seconds Per Eyelid: The Medical Inspection of Immigrants at Ellis Island, 1892-1914." Dynamis, 1997, 17:281-316.

**16 January**

### **Plague and (Early) Modernization**

Boccaccio. The Decameron. Penguin Classic edition , First Day, Introduction.

Slack, Paul. "Responses to plague in early modern Europe: The implications of public health" in Arien Mack, ed. In Time of Plague: The history and social consequences of lethal epidemic disease. NYU Press, 1991 pp.111-131.

Champion, Justin, "Epidemics and the Built Environment in 1665," in: Epidemic Disease in London Working paper series No. 1(University of London Centre for Metropolitan History, 1994), pp. 35-52.

Risse, Guenter. "Bubonic plague, bacteriology and anti-Asian racism in San Francisco, 1900" in: John Harley Warner and Janet A. Tighe. Major problems in the history of American medicine and public health. 2001, pp. 268-274.

Sutphen, M. Preston "Rumored power: Hong Kong, 1894 and Cape Town, 1901" In Western Medicine as Contested Knowledge. Eds. A.Cunningham and B. Andrews. Manchester Univ. Press, pp. 241-261

### **Recommended:**

++Daniel Defoe. "Journal of the the Plague Year" (London 1665) (any edition)

[http://www.mastertexts.com/Defoe\\_Daniel/A\\_Journal\\_of\\_the\\_Plague\\_Year/Index.htm](http://www.mastertexts.com/Defoe_Daniel/A_Journal_of_the_Plague_Year/Index.htm)

Camus, Albert. The Plague (any edition)

**Film: "Epidemics, products of progress"**

**23 January**

**The Unsanitary City: Cholera and Typhoid**

Evans, Richard. "Epidemics and revolutions: cholera in nineteenth century Europe" pp. 149- 173. In: Ranger, T and P. Slack. Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the historical perception of pestilence. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992.

Gallagher, Nancy, Egypt's Other Wars. Epidemics and the politics of public health. Syracuse Univ. Press, 1990  
Chapter 7: Cholera goes out of control. pp. 116-139  
Chapter 8: The British Connection. pp. 140- 159

Cueto, Marcos. "Stigma and Blame during an Epidemic: Cholera in Peru, 1991" in Disease in the History of Modern Latin America: From Malaria to AIDS, edited by Diego Armus, Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 269-289.

Walzer Leavitt, Judith. Typhoid Mary. Captive to the Public's Health. Beacon Press, Boston 1996. Chapter 1. pp. 14-38.

Wing, Frank. "Thirty-five Years of Typhoid. The Economic Cost to Pittsburgh and the Long Fight for Pure Water." In Underwood K, Paul. The Pittsburgh district: civic frontage. NY Arno Press, 1974, pp. 63-86.

**Recommended:**

Rosenberg, Charles The Cholera Years The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) or revised edition.

**30 January**

**Urban Medicine in the "Tropics": Yellow Fever and Smallpox**

++ Knaut, Andrew L., "Yellow fever and the late colonial public health response in the port of Veracruz," Hispanic American Historical Review 1997, 77: 619-644.

Eckert, Jack, "Every prospect of a healthy summer : the 1839 outbreak of yellow fever in Charleston, South Carolina" Transactions & Studies of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia 5. ser., v. 14 (1992) p. 167-175.

Needell, J. "The revolta contra la vacina of 1904: the revolt against 'modernization' in Belle-Epoque Rio de Janeiro." Riots in the Cities. Ed. S. Arrom and S. Ortoll. SR Books, 1996, pp.155-193.

Banthia, J. and T. Dyson, " Smallpox and the impact of vaccination among the Parsees of Bombay," Indian Economic and Social History Review 2000, (27)1:. 27-51.

**6 February                      Public Health and Morality: Syphilis in the City**

Guy, Donna. "Venereal disease, public health and criminality," in Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires. Prostitution, family and nation in Argentina. University of Nebraska Press, 1990. pp. 77- 109.

Fee, Elizabeth. "Sin versus science: venereal disease in twentieth-century Baltimore." in AIDS: The burdens of history. University of California Press, 1988, pp. 121-46.

Lederer, Susan E. and John Parascandola. "Screening Syphilis: Hollywood, the public health service and the fight against venereal disease." in John Harley Warner and Janet A. Tighe, Major problems in the history of American medicine and public health. 2001, pp. 444-450.

**13 February                      AIDS and the New World Order  
  \*\*Short Story Due\*\***

Anderson, W. "The New York needle trial: the politics of public health in the age of AIDS" AIDS and contemporary history, eds. V. Berridge and P. Strong. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993 pp. 157-181.

McGratha, Janet; Charles B. Rwabukwalib, et.al. "Anthropology and AIDS: The cultural context of sexual risk behavior among urban Baganda women in Kampala, Uganda" Social Science & Medicine 1993, Vol. 36 (4): 429-439.

Duffin, J. "AIDS, memory and the history of medicine: musings on the Canadian response." Genitourinary Medicine 1994, 70(1):64-9.

**Film: "Welcome to the new world order: AIDS in Vietnam"**

**27 February                      Public Health, Prosperity, and Polio**

Rogers, Naomi. "A disease of cleanliness: polio in New York City, 1900-1990." pp. 115 -130. In: David Rosner, ed., Hives of Sickness: Public Health and Epidemics in New York City, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

++Christopher J. Ruttly "The Middle Class Plague: Epidemic Polio and the Canadian State, 1936-1937," Canadian Bulletin of Medical History, 13 (2) (1996): 277-314.

**Film: "Conquering the Crippler: History of Polio in Canada"**

**5 March      Persistent Poverty and the Surging and Resurging of Tuberculosis  
\*\*Outline and Annotated Bibliography due\*\***

Hays, J. N. The burdens of disease. Epidemics and human response in Western history. Rutgers Univ. Press, 1998. Chapter 8. Tuberculosis and Poverty. pp.154- 177.

Farmer, Paul, “A Plague on All Our Houses?: Resurgent Tuberculosis inside Russia’s Prisons.” In Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor University of California Press, 2003, pp. 115-133.

**Recommended:**

Gale, Godfrey L. The Changing Years: The Story of Toronto Hospital and the Fight Against Tuberculosis. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.

**12 March      Respiratory Globalization, Part I: Influenza**

Crosby, Alfred W. America’s Forgotten Pandemic. The influenza of 1918. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989.

Chapter 2. The advance of the influenza virus. pp. 17- 36

Chapter 3. Three explosions Africa, Europe and America. pp. 37-41

Killingray, David. “The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 in the British Caribbean” Social History of Medicine: 1994 7 (1) pp. 59- 87.

**Film: “Influenza 1918”**

**19 March      Respiratory Globalization, Part II: SARS**

++Farmer, Paul “ SARS and Inequality” The Nation, May 26, 2003.

++Toronto – U.S. Large Urban Areas: SARS Conference Call Summary Notes, June 26, 2003.

++“SARS Death Rate Doubles In Polluted Cities,” Science Daily 20 November 2003.

++Gostin, Lawrence et al. “Ethical and Legal Challenges Posed by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome: Implications for the Control of Severe Infectious Disease Threats” Journal of the American Medical Association 2003, 290:3229-3237.

++“Renewal of Public Health in Canada” *A report of the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health October 2003, passim*

Available at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/protection/warnings/sars/learning/index.htm>

Also peruse website: [http://www.sarssickness.com/sars\\_history.htm](http://www.sarssickness.com/sars_history.htm)

## **26 March      Respiratory Globalization, Part III: Asthma and Air Pollution**

Anto JM, Sunyer J. “A point-source asthma outbreak.” Lancet 1986 Apr 19, 1(8486):900-3.

Page Snyder, Lynne. “The death-dealing smog over Donora, Pennsylvania: Industrial air pollution, public health policy and the politics of expertise, 1948 – 1949” Environmental History Review, Spring 1994. pp. 117-139

++ Guest editorials by Devra Davis et al. and David Bates in Environmental Health Perspectives December 2002, 110(12):A734-5.

Peruse *Series on pollution in Mexico City*:

“Ill economy, ill weather, now ill health.” New York Times, June 16, 1983.

“The city that can’t fix the air.” New York Times, Feb 4, 1996.

“Mexico City’s air, A fatal case of fatalism.” New York Times, Feb 14, 1999.

“Mexico City losing gains in air quality, more and more cars put city in a pollution jam.” Chicago Tribune, Jul 5, 2001.

“The Americas: the right to drive or the right to breathe? Air pollution in Latin America.” The Economist, Mar 9, 2002.

## **2 April            Urban Flames: Fire and Heat Waves**

Wallace, D. and R. Wallace. A Plague on your Houses. How New York was Burned Down and National Public Health Crumbled. Verso, 1998, Introduction, passim.

Klinenberg, Eric. Heat Wave. A social autopsy of disaster in Chicago. Chicago Univ. Press, 2002, pp. 1-78

**OR**

Gladwell, M. “Political heat. The great Chicago heat wave, and other unnatural disasters” The New Yorker, August 12, 2002. pp. 76- 80.

**Final Session: Date/place to be decided (9 April is a University holiday)**

**and                    A Better Future? The Healthy Cities Movement  
Student Presentations of Research Papers  
\*\* Final paper due\*\***

++Trevor Hancock, “Healthy cities and communities: past, present and future,” National Civic Review Vol. 86, no. 1 (1997), p. 11-21.

++Rosenberg, Charles E. “Pathologies of progress : the idea of civilization as risk,” Bulletin of the History of Medicine Vol. 72, no. 4 (Winter 1998) p. 714-730.